



KADMA

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Coorg Wildlife Society
QUARTERLY
AUG 2004

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from the Editor

Global climatic changes have created transitions in weather patterns that have taken their toll on animal and plant life. Kodagu too has witnessed it's share of changes and it is the responsibility of the people here to try and protect the surviving species and to slowly try to rebuild an environment that has slowly but surely deteriorated over the years. It is with this background, that projects like planting of native tree species in forest areas and initiation of Eco-Development Committees, to name a few were started. I sincerely hope our members will be able to participate in any such project being undertaken in their vicinity.

Western Ghats - A Global Hotspot

The concept of hotspot was introduced by an ecologist Norman Myers in 1988, who defined it as an area of exceptional plant, animal and microbe wealth that is under threat. The Western Ghats is one of 25 global hotspots. The other hotspot in India is the Eastern Himalayas bordering Burma and China.

The Western Ghats stretch 1,440 km from the Tapi River north of Mumbai to Kanyakumari. Experts estimate that there are 84 amphibians, 16 birds, 7 mammals and a whopping 1,600 flowering plants that are found here and nowhere else on the earth. The fact that this biologically rich area is threatened by human activity places it in the hotspot category.

Every summer, ocean currents push the southwest monsoon clouds up the Malabar Coast. The Ghats prevent the monsoon clouds from reaching the interiors of the peninsula. The hilltops force most of this rain to fall on the western coast and mountains. The forested slopes act as a giant sponge, absorb the rain and release it to the thirsty plains below during the ensuing drier season.

The forest cover and grasslands, which constitute the natural vegetation of this region get destroyed and replaced by agriculture land and other human intervention. As a result the mountains yield less water to the plains. Hence protection of the Western Ghats and its vegetation is vital to the millions of people living in its watershed area on both the eastern and western sides.

This issue of KADMA is sponsored by

MR. C. K. POOVAYA

The Western Ghats have been protected from serious exploitation throughout much of India's long history. Sheer inaccessibility has made the mountain terrain difficult to cultivate and settle on. Many indigenous communities overcame these difficulties and learned to live with the habitat, and not against it. On the contrary, human activities including clearing of large areas of virgin tropical forest for plantations, railway projects, mega-hydroelectric and irrigation projects with dubious long-term benefits are submerging and fragmenting extensive forest areas. With hill-stations expanding and mineral exploration being done around forest areas, it is bound to have a severe environmental impact in the near future.



Western Ghat Forests have a unique flora and fauna within them

People at various levels are striving to protect this fragile bio-system from further damage. It is only due to the untiring efforts of certain individuals and agencies that the forest areas and sanctuaries that we see today are surviving. Figures indicate that of the 159,000 sq. km. area of the Western Ghats only a mere 8.1 per cent is protected.

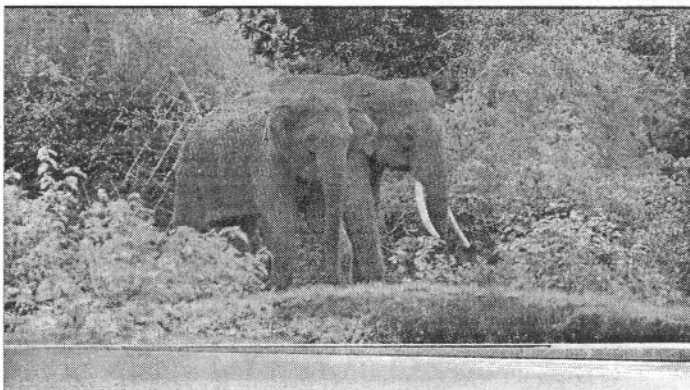
Hence, it is critical at this point of time to create awareness on the impact of the Western Ghats. There are numerous examples of places and areas that have almost come to the brink of being environmentally written off and are now trying to recover lost ground.

Therefore, it is vital for a concerted effort to protect the Western Ghats, as the ecological well being of this region will always have a great impact on an area which is many times larger than this global hotspot.

Eco Development committees (EDCs)

EDCs are organisations constituted for carrying out afforestation and related works in villages especially in protected and reserved forests under the national afforestation policy. They are registered with the Forest Development Agency (FDA) in the respective division. The Conservator of Forests heads the FDA with the senior officers of Forest and other departments assisting him.

EDCs consist of members who are permanent residents of the village and who have paid a subscription fee of Rs.2.00 (Rs.1.00 for SC/ST) and who have not involved themselves in forest offences including encroachment of forestlands. The governing body



EDCs will play a major role in protecting wildlife and forests

consists of a President, four members belonging to general category, two each from SCs and STs with one woman in each category, one artisan and one landless labour are elected in the general body. The governing committee has four Ex-officio members, the jurisdictional Forester who will be the Secretary of the EDC, the jurisdictional Village Accountant, Grama Panchayath Secretary and one representative of an NGO to be chosen by the members and to be nominated by the DFO.

Funds are provided by the Central Government through the Forest Department and the work shall be strictly in consonance with the approved microplan. So far about fifty EDCs have been constituted in Kodagu District and much afforestation and protection work has been taken up through these EDCs in Devarakadus and reserve forests. EDCs at Kardigod - Chikkanhalli, Maldare-Kodagu Srirangapatna, Badaga-Banangala, Chennankote

- Chennangi and Hebbale - Badragola have also involved themselves in erection of new solar powered fences to contain elephant menace in their areas.

The forest department has provided ample support and also funds through Project Elephant. The President of CWS Col. C.P. Muthanna, Vice-President Sri.K.N.Changappa, members Sri. C.S.Nanda Subbaiah and Sri.Kambiranda Nanda have been instrumental in getting help at various quarters and the fence erected by IBEX Gallagher from River Cauvery at Karadigod to Balmany at Thithimathi is in place and is doing its job well.

Tusker Death

A tusker died in the Hebbale-Badragola forest, part of the Thithimathi Range, on the 29th of February 2004. He was like his species, a majestic shy animal, which disappeared at the hint of human presence. Around January this year he suddenly turned aggressive and started chasing vehicles and people alike. This it turned out was due to a large festering wound on his rump, clearly visible from afar. He was also in some sort of respiratory distress, as a bubbling sound could be heard from a distance of as much as a 100 metres.

The local people approached Col. Muthanna of Coorg Wildlife Society for help. He apprised the officials of the forest department of the problem. In spite of their best efforts and there being a provision in the law, whereby an injured animal can be tranquilized and moved for treatment, it took two months for anything to be done. Orders had to come from Delhi, bureaucratic red tape, a negative mindset and even political interference, led to this fatal delay. The hellish conditions in the teak forest in the summer months added to the animal's agony. Alas, when help finally arrived it was too late for this poor animal. He was tranquilized on 29/2/04, but he was too weak to survive the ordeal.

A needless death. Eyewitnesses say that the body of this once magnificent animal was in a horrific condition. Maggots infested every orifice. There were over 100 pellet wounds on his body and more than 5 bullet wounds along his spine. Where is man's humane spirit? How many more animals are going to die before we find a way to coexist?

You will agree that this was no way for such a noble animal to die, that too at a time when the CAG's report states that the elephant population is on the decline in Karnataka, despite the increased resources being set aside for conservation measures.

Sajini Monappa.

Sowing the seeds for a greener tomorrow..

In adversity there is opportunity, the combined efforts of Coorg Wildlife Society, the Forest Department and the students of Lions School, Goncoppal and Government High School, Thithimathi proved this true. The drought of 2003 and the resultant forest fires had left large tracts of Mawkal betta, in the Thithimathi range denuded. Col. Muthanna and his team of volunteers decided to reintroduce indigenous tree species into these particular forest areas.

This was done in 2 stages. On day one, 19th July



Volunteers who assisted with the tree - planting programme

2004, about 50 scouts and guides from Lions School, Goncoppal armed with dibbling sticks, planted over 5000 seeds in the upper reaches of Mawkal betta over an area of about 4 acres. On day two, 21st July 2004, the lower reaches of Mawkal were tackled by 56 students of Government High School, Thithimathi, with similar success.

The seeds were provided by the forest department and included many local varieties such as Mathi, Honne, Acacia, wild neem and some flowering trees. The Forest Department also provided guards. Our heartfelt thanks to them as without their support none of this could have been achieved. The wholehearted support of the ACF and Range Forest Officer, Sundara Shetty, heralds a new era of cooperation, which bodes well for the future of Coorg's forest wealth. Lunch was provided for all by Coorg Wildlife Society and EDC members organized tea.

School children must be given the chance to plant at least two trees, so we thought this was a good way to introduce the younger generation to the idea of forest regeneration as well. The idea behind this program evolved from President Abdul Kalam's appeal to increase the forest cover. If the enthusiasm of the children was anything to go by, a good job was done, the rest is in the lap of the rain Gods!

Kaveri Appanna and Sajini Monappa
Thithimathi

News from the CWS desk.....

De-silting of tanks

At the request of the CWS, two tanks were de-silted and expanded by the Forest Department prior to the monsoon. These two tanks namely, Mallikatte and Hosakere are in the Thithimathi range and it is heartening to see the large number of footprints of bison and elephants around these tanks in recent days.

Afforestation in Thithimathi Range

An afforestation program was organized during July this year, for school children at Basripare and Singanur Hadlu forest areas in the Thithimathi range. The seeds were provided by the DFO, Virajpet. The program was successfully completed with the assistance of Forest Dept. staff, CWS members, Coorg Foundation and Tata Coffee Ltd.

Solar Fencing

Solar fencing has been completed over a distance of 28 kilometers along the Valnur -Maldare - Thithimathi stretch of forests. Eco-Development Committees have been set up in these areas to monitor the functioning of the fence. The government was initially willing to fund the project to an extent of fifty percent but due to the representation made by CWS, the entire project was established with government funding.

Dubare Island

An application was filed in the Civil Court in Madikeri, for CWS to be included as a party in the ongoing case regarding the island and the application was accepted.

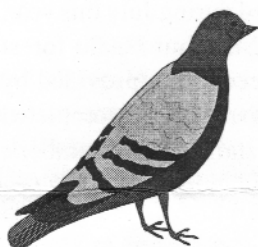
Dear Members, due to increases in printing and postage costs, we appeal to members and friends to kindly take the opportunity to sponsor future issues of Kadma, either in part or full. This will assist us to continue publishing the magazine and play a role in environmental care and concern.

ON SALE

CWS Caps, T- Shirts, Umbrellas (Large & Small) Stickers, Belts, Lapel Badges, Books-Snakes of Kodagu (Kannada), Flowers of Kodagu (English) & Handbook on Rain Water Harvesting.

CHILDREN'S PAGE

There are 20 common birds found in Coorg hidden in the square. Locate the answers and send them to the addresses mentioned at the end of the newsletter.



A	X	W	O	O	D	P	E	C	K	E	R	K	B	A	C
C	D	N	B	H	R	E	R	J	T	G	U	I	U	J	D
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R	Y	V	N	Y	T	O	S	C	V	T	U	C	X	T	E
A	F	G	I	O	H	L	H	B	N	O	R	N	X	B	X
K	J	J	U	N	G	L	E	F	O	W	L	Z	V	A	S
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H	S	P	A	R	R	O	W	U	Y	V	Y	Y	E	T	A



ELEPHANTINE INTELLIGENCE.

This is a true incident that took place more than 50 years ago. The forest department in Tamilnadu (then Madras state) had trained elephants like they have today. To prevent the elephants from straying, the forelegs used to be chained to each other at night. The elephants also had bells tied around their necks so that the mahouts could make out where the elephants were.

One day the villagers complained that an elephant that belonged to the forest department had strayed into their paddy fields and damaged their crops. The forest officials were however emphatic that it was not their elephant as they had chained its legs and the bell around its neck would ring when it moved. However, since the villagers were so insistent that it was their elephant they decided to keep watch. When night came, sure enough, the elephant embarked on its nocturnal trip. What the officials saw shocked them. The elephant caught the bell with its trunk so that it would not ring. Since its fore legs were in chains, it hopped up to the paddy fields, had its fill of the paddy grass and in the same manner came back to its place and stood there as innocent as ever.

Think twice before using pesticides.

Endosulphan was being sprayed to the coffee plants in an estate here in Kodagu. The labourer had to cross a small stream with the spray mixture containing endosulphan. One of the women tripped while crossing the stream and the contents fell into the water. She did not tell anyone of the incident. This stream flows into a neighbour's tank. He was rearing fish. Within seconds the fish started dying and floating on the surface. The veterinary doctor was called and asked to identify the reason for the death of so many fish. He suspected it to be a pesticide poisoning. Eventually the woman admitted to having accidentally spilt the pesticide. The entire population of fish in the tank was destroyed.

In another incident, the containers in which the endosulphan was mixed, were washed in the tank on the estate unknowingly, here too all the fish in the tank died.

1 spoon of endosulphan is enough to kill all the fish in a tank ½ an acre or more in size. It would have the same effect on all living beings, including man.

Did you know that cauliflower has a very sweet scent like the coffee blossom? The unpleasant smell, especially while cooking it, is due to the pesticides sprayed on it to keep it pest free and nice looking for the customer. An organically grown cauliflower has the sweet scent.

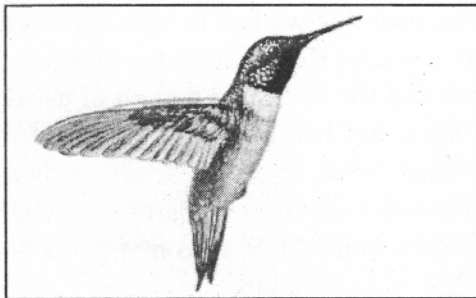
CHILDREN'S PAGE

Knowing Nature: Fireflies

Have you ever wondered how these amazing insects produce that dazzling light around themselves? These flashes of light are very precisely timed indicating the existence of a signaling mechanism. The abdomens of fireflies contain thousands of specialized cells called photocytes that store the chemical luciferin. It reacts with oxygen that enters into the cells producing light. The photocytes are lined with mitochondria that are known as the 'power plants' of a cell because they utilize oxygen to produce energy. So how does the oxygen get past the mitochondria to get to the photocytes? Researchers suggest that nerve signal turn on the production of nitric oxide, which is a signaling molecule. The nitric oxide subsequently turns off the mitochondria in the photocytes, allowing the oxygen to initiate the chemical reaction that creates the glow.

Flying Facts

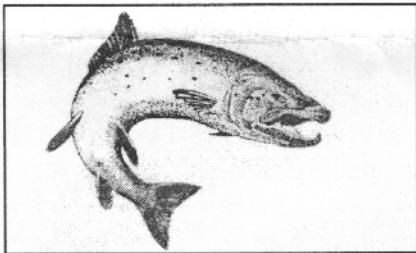
The smallest bird in the world is believed to be the male "Bee hummingbird" found in Cuba, which measures all of 5.6 cm. from beak to tail.



Hummingbird - smallest member of the Avian family.

The Peregrine Falcon is classified as the fastest known bird with a recorded speed of an incredible 349 km/h in a 45-degree dive.

The Wandering Albatross has the distinction of being the bird with the largest wingspan. The largest specimen recorded was a male measuring 3m. 63 cm. between wingtips.



Salmon - which spends most of its life in chilly waters has antifreeze compounds in its body

Antifreeze

Fish that inhabit the polar region swim around in waters where the temperature is regularly close to -2° C. They cannot remain supercooled as they regularly

encounter ice crystals in the water that may serve as nuclei for fatal ice formation within their bodies. The blood and tissue fluids of these fish contain "antifreeze" compounds that lower the freezing point without affecting the melting point. These compounds are usually glycoproteins that act by preventing the addition of water molecules to the crystal lattice of ice, and thereby arrest the growth of ice crystals and prevent the freezing of body fluids.

Tips for trekkers

A trek is explained in the dictionary as 'a long or wearisome journey'. To make it enjoyable, follow these simple rules.



◆ Prepare yourself many days ahead by doing some form of physical exercise. An hour of brisk walking and breathing exercises as in yoga, will help.

◆ The shoes you wear should be good for long distances, over very rough terrain. Hunters made by Bata are as good as any and available everywhere.

◆ The clothes you wear should not be too bright; the colors you choose should blend with Nature.

u A hat is necessary to protect you from the sun. Dark glasses will keep the dust and glare away from your eyes.

◆ Packed food should be light. Sandwiches and dried fruits should be enough. Add some peanut brittle and boiled sweets to make the picnic a four-course meal.

◆ Pack all the wrappers, plastic bags, etc. to be disposed off later. The only stuff that requires no attention is what can be absorbed by nature-in other words, biodegradable.

A trek is an unhurried walk through Nature enjoy it.

Amazing Nature

Butterflies taste food with their legs.

The eyes of a donkey are placed in such a way that can see all four of its legs.

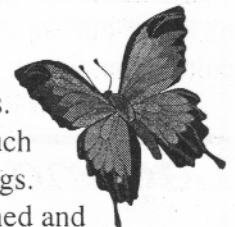
Antlers are made of bone and are shed and re-grown each year, while horns are made of keratin and are grown for life.

Hippos sweat pink. The pores on hippo bodies ooze a pink sweat, this pink substance helps them cool down and keeps their skin moist.

The young ones of several species of deer are spotted when they are born, as their coloration helps to conceal them in the dappled light of the forests.

Immediately after they are born, fawns are licked clean by their mothers. This action helps increase blood circulation in the young one. Fawns of course, are quite well developed at birth and most in fact, begin walking within a couple of hours. They seem to have boundless energy, prancing and running round in the full knowledge that their mother will sound an alarm at the first sign of danger.

The color of gold fish fades due to flowing water or dim light



A TREK TO BARAPOLE

The Coorg Adventure Club organized a trek to Barapole and when we heard that some of the members of Coorg Wildlife Society could join them, it was welcome news. We had a lull in our outdoor activities for more than a month and we all looked forward to this outing.

We set off on the 11th of January, some of us got together at Gonikoppal and drove to Ponnampet where we were joined by a group of school children. From there we had to go on the Kunda road towards Kuttandi village. It was a forty-five minute drive to the place where we had to leave the vehicles.

The group was a large one-75 members, and we started at 9.30A.M. After walking through dense forests for an hour and a half, negotiating very steep inclines, we got down the hill and reached Barapole. Barapole is a river that rises from a plateau in the Brahmagiri hills in Kiggatnad and flows westwards towards Kerala. After relaxing near the river for a while, it was soon time for us to start walking. For a long distance we walked parallel to the riverbank and though we could not actually see the river, we could hear the gushing waters. The forest that we walked through had some trees of gigantic size – ebony, wild-mango, rosewood – and also a variety of palms, which we were told, had medicinal value. The highlight of the trek was, when we came across thousands of butterflies flitting about in one particular valley. It was just “butterflies” everywhere and was a real feast to the eyes.

Our next destination was Saratabbi falls - this is a tributary that falls over a perpendicular rock, 73 meters high and joins Barapole. Getting there was very tough, as the path that we had to take was a very steep climb through the jungle, with part of the walk being through a coffee estate! Here, part of the group in their eagerness to get to the top of the ‘falls’ had to scramble over sheer rock and we were glad that all of us were back in one piece! After walking for almost 4 – 5 hours, at some tight spots, we had to use a rope to get us up the rocky slopes. We reached a nice shady spot with water. This was our lunch break. Every one was famished and welcomed the break. It was ‘packed lunch’ for all sponsored by the Human Resources Department. After lunch we had tea, which was made available by some members of Coorg Adventure Club, who met us for lunch. They had boiling water going and so any amount of tea could be drunk.

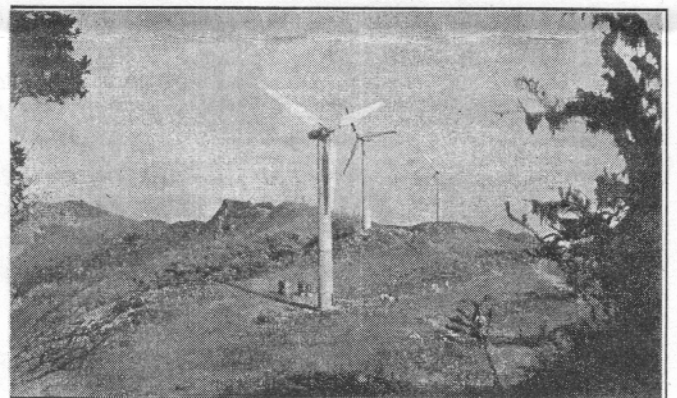
As it was getting dark, we had to set off again and after an hour’s walk through the jungle we were back to where our vehicles were parked. On our way back we saw signs of forests being cleared for coffee/ginger cultivation, which did not end our trek on a happy note.

Before it is too late, let us all become aware of the importance of retaining our original forests.

Legends surrounding Talacauvery

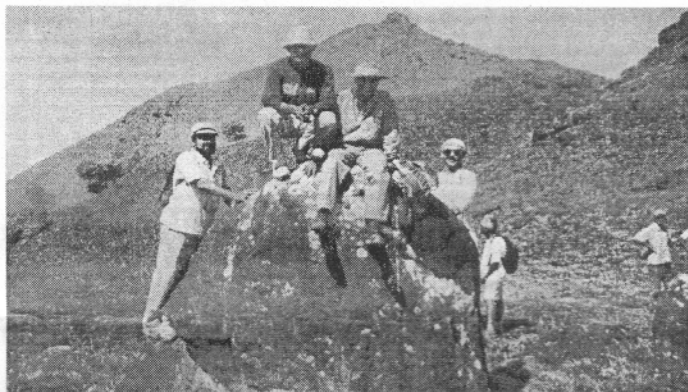
Talacauvery has a few interesting spots nearby; each with a story of its own. Our trek was planned to take in some of these places.

Baapare is approximately 2-3 kms from the Forest Inspection Bungalow and lies beyond the source of the river Kannike that is now virtually reduced to a pond with a multitude of colorful, floating variety of flowers. En route to Baapare, we came across the remnants of the much-talked about and now abandoned windmill project for generating electricity. It is believed that the rock feature at Baapare split during a clash between Pandavas and their adversaries. Arjuna, the Pandava lodged the displaced rock in its place, by pushing it with his shoulders. Beneath the rock cliff at Baapare there exists a huge cave. The descent into it is over 20 ft. A river presumably originates in the cave. The cave has an exit from another side. However as the trekking party was not adequately equipped to explore the dark cave, the river source and the exit could not be located.



Redundant windmills at Baapare

Malle motte and Kodavathi Kal (rock): At Malle Motte, a small rock barely 4 ft in height stands isolated. The story is about an energetic Kodavathi who leaped over the rock in her exuberance on learning that her husband had returned home on leave from the Raja's army. In those days, the hardy Coorg woman used to grow and harvest cardamom in the nearby jungles, the approach to which was through circuitous, far trails along the ridges. The rock as such does not appear to be an imposing and formidable feature and poses no great challenge even for a modern Kodavathi as was amply demonstrated by some of the ladies.



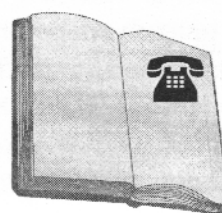
Kodavathi Kal

Bhima kal was presumably a transit point in the days of yore when people walked to Talacauvery and no present day arrangements existed for short halts or camping. Approximately 4-5 kms from Talacauvery, is an ancient rocky complex with a cozy cave that can easily accommodate over a dozen people. The cave has a door like opening and evidence of cooking was visible in the form of crude chulas made out of rock. The Pandavas presumably also visited the cave, hence the name Bhima kal. On enquiring it was revealed that the complex is on private property belonging to one Vittala Rao.

The Brahmins wife narrated an interesting story to us, about the area around Talacauvery. Prior to the advent of Tippu Sultan, around 80 Coorg families/ okkas used to live around Bhagamandala and Talacauvery area. At Talacauvery the land presently being occupied by the Gowdas used to belong to four Kodava okkas presumably Manavvatirra, Mandira, Machetira and Kaliyatanda. As Coorgs were targeted and spontaneously killed or captured by the hordes of Tippu Sultan, they were forced to abandon their land and migrate to secure places or the forests around. Seeing the fertile land being devoid of human habitation the then Coorg Raja resettled the Gowda families from Amar Sulya to Talacauvery the rights of which they continue to enjoy to this day.

Another interesting story is about four Kodava shikaris, including Kalliyatanda Ponnappa who were on a wild boar shoot in the forests adjacent to Kerala. On encountering a boar, the hunters let fly their primitive arrows that only injured people wearing different attire. Their curiosity led them to interact with these people. They were well received and taken to their ruler. The Kodavas were Nature and ancestor worshippers, and now they had their initiation into the Gods being worshipped in Kerala. The presence of Ganesha and Shiva temples in and around Talacauvery and Bagamandala is presumably the result of the Coorg hunter's foray into Kerala. On their return, as a transit

CWS is preparing a directory of members who are interested in various activities concerning wildlife and environment like trekking, fishing, bird-watching etc.



Kindly fill in the details below and mail it back to us or inform the CWS office for future contact

Name :

Address :

Tele No :

Mob :

e- mail :

Areas of interest :

hut which stands there till this day. It is believed that if one wants to enter the hut he has to repeat *Manotira* thrice, only then the doors are opened to the guest.



Kanni Kund

Kanni Kund: This is about 4 kms from Bhagamandala. A tar road leads left to Cherangala village. The motorable road is up to an anganavadi close to Cherangala School. The gradual walk of about 1.5 km. leads to a Brahmin Nanayya's house, beyond which is a path that leads to Kanni Kund. It is believed that Kaveri as a young girl used to bathe at the spot. It has very picturesque and serene surroundings with a cascade of waterfalls leading into a placid pool formed by a bathtub shaped rock feature. In the days of yore 35 Nad Thakkas used to assemble at Kaveri kund on the night preceding Kaveri Shankramana and offer pujas followed by a *kombu kottu vaalaga* procession leading to the source of Kaveri. The practice is still followed albeit on a smaller scale.

Arathi Muthanna & Prabha Appachu

(This is an excerpt from the letter written by Mr. Zafer Futehally)

Z.Futehally, 2205 Oakwood Apts
Koramangala, 8th main, 3rd block, Bangalore-560034
E-mail ZAFAR123@vsnl.net

KADMA of Dec 2003 is very interesting and practical. We will try out some of the water harvesting techniques in KIHIM I wonder if CWS would like to attempt a project for protecting the Red faced Malkoha in Coorg. If you succeed, it will be ornithologically very exciting. A new ENDEMIC species will be added to our list. The BHNS under their BIRDLIFE-IBA programme may lend assistance.

Regards,
Zafer Futehally

Thank you for your appreciation of our newsletter. We will try to follow up on the Red faced Malkoha. Thank you for your letter.

Editor

The treks for members CWS will be conducted during September, October and November. The tentative plan is to Thadiyandamol, Pushpagiri and W y n a d (Gurukulam Botanical Sanctuary). Those wishing to know the details should leave the telephone numbers at the CWS Office. You will be informed nearer to the day.

Articles & answers to be sent to either

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